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LOCAL HISTORY:

LINCOLN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

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"THE WILDERNESS TRAIL"

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BY

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THE WILDERNESS TRAIL IN LINCOLN COUNTY

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(By Will N. Craig, M.D.)

Historians, for the most part, do not dwell largely on the visits of adventurers who came into Kentucky prior to 1700, for such adventurers made no permanent impression upon the territory. They left no traces, and seemingly made no effort to establish settlements.

The history of Kentucky, or that section in which we are particularly interested, begins with the first visit of Dr. Thomas Walker, who, in 1747, crossed the Cumberland Mountains at Cumberland Gap and penetrated the wilderness as far as a point, in now Laurel County, where he built the first log cabin in the territory. A replica of the cabin is the principal attraction in the Levi-Jackson State Park, and thousands of tourists visit it yearly.

The history of a territory is intimately associated with the names of its interesting points, and the origin of such names entails an account of pioneer activities in explorations and deeds of valor as recorded in official documents, legends, and folklore.

In determining the origin of place names, in some instances documentary evidence is available, in others, presumptive evidence must be accepted. Legends often play an important role, and the topography of a given area may be a determining factor. An unusual incident will crown a place with a descriptive title, which in time becomes fixed and unchangeable.

The fewness of names in Kentucky derived from the Indian tongue is worthy of note, and can only be accounted for by the fact that there were no permanent Indian settlements in the territory, although it was a common hunting ground for several tribes.

The one name that stands out prominently as derived from an Indian word is Kentucky, the name of both the state, and its largest river. It has its derivation in the Indian work, "Cutawa", the significance of which we do not know, unless it means "boundary". The Indians respected each other's hunting grounds, and it may be presumed that the river was a line of demarkation between areas used by the different tribes.

In its evolution "Cutawa" became Kentucky, according to the United States Gazetteer, which was published in 1833, and compiled by authors who lived at a time when familiarity with the Indian tongue was possible. The various spellings of Kentucky were coincidental to that which later was authorized by Legislative act.

The Kentucky River was first known to the pioneers by the English name, Louisa or Levisa, a name given to it by Dr. Thomas Walker on his first visit, in 1747. The first female white child born in Kentucky was Louisa (or Levisa) Whitley- named for the river- a daughter of Col. William and Esther Fullen Whitley. We are proud to claim a lineal descendant of the father and mother of that child as a citizen of Stanford, Miss Esther Whitley Burch, authoress and historian, who glorifies her ancestry in her patriotism and zeal in preserving the history of the pioneer days.

In 1780 Lincoln County was established as one of the three original counties into which the District of Kentucky was divided. The original boundary of the county embraced about one-third of the District, but in subsepuent years it has been reduced by cutting off sections to form other counties, until its present area is about 450 square miles.

Lincoln County was named in honor of Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, a distinguished officer of the Revolutionary Army, who, in 1778, was designated by Congress to

conduct the war in the southern states. In 1781 Gen. Lincoln was honored by Gen. Washington with the office of receiving the sword of Cornwallis at Yorktown, and directing the distribution of the conquered troops. In justice to Kentucky's three great pioneers, - Logan, Whitley, and Shelby, - it may be said that they reflected great glory on the county in heroic achievements no less brilliant than the achievements depicted in the career of Gen. Lincoln himself, for whom the county was named.

In exploring a territory the first consideration of the pioneers was water, and traces made by them followed very closely the courses of streams.

In 1769, when the Long Hunters were embarrassed because of a shortage of food, James Knox, Richard Skaggs, and four others, left the party and traveled westwardly in search of game. They crossed the Rockcastle River and traveled up Skaggs Creek, where they met a party of Cherokee Indians. Captain Dick, chief of the Indians, told them to cross Brushy Ridge, and come to his river where they would find game "plenty". The Long Hunters found the stream, and named it Dick's River in honor of the Indian chieftan, Captain Dick, who had befriended them.

The topography of the county, and the course of the streams, indicate that the crossing of Brushy Ridge from Skaggs Creek, would be near the head-waters of Dick's River, which has its source in the confluence of several small streams near Brodhead, one of which was Negro Creek, on which the famous Captain Jacob Baughman Massacre took place in about 1782. Legends state that had it not been for the overweening desire of Mrs. Baughman to be properly garbed on their arrival at Whitley's Fort the massacre would not have occurred. She insisted on remaining at the English Station until the effects of the arduous trek over the

Wilderness Trail had disappeared, and repairs to her wardrobe had been made. This delay gave the pursuing Indians time to catch up with the party and commit one of the most atrocious massacres recorded in pioneer history.

The crossing of Brushy Ridge to Dick's River, by the Long Hunters, was the farthest west that the pioneers had penetrated into this section of the wilderness up to that time, so far as available records show. While the Long Hunters were exploring the southeastern territory, the Henderson party, headed by Boone, were exploring the northeastern area; and, although both parties remained in the territory for two years or more, they never met or visited the central area- now Lincoln County.

In 1775 Benjamin Logan, with two or three slaves, met Daniel Boone, Henderson, and others, in Powell Valley, on their way to Kentucky and traveled with them to Hazel Patch, a point about ten miles north of London, Laurel County, where they camped. A division of the trail at that point is indicated on Filson's map, drawn from surveys made in 1784-89, and confirmed in Collins' History of Kentucky. The Boone trace led north to the Kentucky River from that point.

Logan, who did not approve of the plans of the other members of the party, separated from them and headed westwardly. He blazed the trail to a point, where, at the end of his rainbow, he found the pot of gold, to be the magnificant group of springs which supplies the city of Stanford with water today. It was there that Logan established his fort in 1775, at the same time that Boone established his fort at Boonesboro.

To Benjamin Logan, who stands preeminent in the annals of Kentucky history as a pioneer, warrior, and statesman, is due the credit for extending the Wilderness Trail from Hazel Patch, through Rockcastle County, and the unexplored territory of the present Lincoln County, to the site of his fort, and later, to Harrod's settlement. (Harrod approached the site of his settlement from the north.) It was Col. Logan who, in 1784, instigated the movement which resulted in statehood for Kentucky in 1792, and it is due to his patriotism and generosity, that Lincoln enjoys the distinction of being the first county in the state to establish a Seat of Justice. This is evidenced by the records in the archives of the county.

Benjamin Logan filled many official positions, and his career justifies the inscription which is found on his monument in the Logan burial ground near Shelbyville, Kentucky.

> "Benjamin Logan died December 1802, in his 60th year. A name so engraven in the history of his country and the affection of posterity, the highest monument of fame. Married Ann Montgomery, who shared with him in the many perils of their Wilderness home."

On September 11, 1936, a memorial tablet, placed on the massive column of Stanford's Court House, and erected by the Logan-Whitley Chapter of the D. A. R., was unveiled as a tribute to that intrepid pioneer, Benjamin Logan, and in commemoration of the establishment of Stanford in

1786. In the celebration of this sesqui-centennial, a pageant was enacted, depicting the habits and customs of the people of that period; while the story of Kentucky's birthday and progress was read from the steps of the building to the great delight of an immense gathering of patriotic citizens.

Logan's trace from Hazel Patch passed through the "Orchard", which is a unique locality in Lincoln County, extending from the springs area, up Dick's River valley to near Brodhead. The Orchard derived its name from the immense forest of apple trees which are indiginous to that section. (Remnants of the orchard are still in evidence.) The fruit of the orchard was a great boon to the pioneers, who made of it a delectable confection, crab-apple jelly, than which there is none better.

The "Orchard", as a name for this place, supersedes that of Moore's Station, which was located on a knoll south of the village where the water tower now stands. When the Orchard became a post village, it was named Crab-Orchard after the particular kind of apple trees which predominated there. In ante bellum days it was the rendezvous of great caravans of the southern gentry who were attracted by the virtues of its several medicinal waters, and thereafter it was more generally spoken of as Crab-Orchard Springs. The springs were named for the pioneers on whose preemption they were located, or for the constituents of the waters. Prominent in the list are Foley's, Bryant's, Sowder's, Brown's, Caldwell's, and Howard's Springs. From the epsom waters of Crab-Orchard, and vicinity, are made the nationally

known Crab-Orchard salts.

Two miles east of Crab-Orchard is the site of the English Station, about which little is known.

Six miles east of Stanford, on the Wilderness Trail, Col. William Whitley established his fort prior to 1779. The establishment of this fort marked the beginning of a new era in the affairs of the Wilderness. It was the first haven of the pioneers who ventured that far into the wilderness after the "bloody sevens", and around this historic fort were centered many activities, which resulted in the suppression of hostile Indians, - by treaty or otherwise, - and guaranteed reasonable security to the settlers.

The career of Col. Whitley crowns his home with a halo of glory. in 1782-86 his fort gave way to the first brick house built in Kentucky, and thus proclaimed him the arbiter of an architectural innovation, that elevated the wilderness from a log cabin era to a period of civic progression. The home of Col. Whitley was named "Sportsman's Hill", and around a knoll, adjoining the stately mansion, was built the first race track in Kentucky, - a track which greatly enhanced the prestige of the state as the fatherland of fine horses. Through a sense of patriotism and homage due to Col. Whitley, who was one of the most valiant officers of the Revolutionary War, the restoration of his historic mansion has materialized, and it now stands as a State Shrine and Monument, to that intrepid leader and warrior in

perilous times. Col. Whitley served with great distinction in seventeen engagements with the enemy. In his honor a memorial tablet has been erected at his shrine bearing this inscription:

"Col. William Whitley, born 1749, Philanthropist,
Patriot, Poet, Hero, killed in the battle of the
Thames, 1813."

Erected by Logan-Whitley Chapter
D. A. R. July 4, 1920

Whitley's Creek, a branch of Cedar Creek, which flows to Dick's River, supplied the immense estate with water. Cedar Creek is so-called for the abundance of trees of the same name which flourished along its course.

Four miles east of Stanford on the Wilderness Trail is Walnut Flat, the ancestral home of the Owsleys. The name of the home is derived from the forest of walnut trees which abounded in that section. It was built in 1812-16 by Samuel Owsley. His brother, William Owsley, who was Kentucky's sixteenth governor in 1844, labored in the construction of the mansion after returning from the War of 1812. In 1816 Samuel Owsley gave the land on which was built, what is thought to be, the second of the Cumberland Presbyterian Churches in Kentucky. This church became the center of the post-village, Walnut Flat, which boasted a Main Street and several side streets, a black-smith shop, a corner store, which was the post office, and several residences; but like Goldsmith's "Deserted Village", the town

has long since passed into the limbo of things forgotten. The name of the home remains to designate a historic locality.

A relic of pioneer days is the old stone house, known as the Darst House, which was built in the latter years of the 18th century, on the Wilderness Trail by Col. John Logan, for whom the stream which it faces was named.

When Benjamin Logan had penetrated this far into the wilderness, he found a little stream, which mingled its crystal waters with those of Logan's Creek. The stream wormed its course through a valley, skirted on the one side with rugged cliffs, and on the other with immense fields of blue-grass and cane. Besides the stream was a buffalo path, which led to its source, and that path became the extension of the Wilderness Trail blazed by Benjamin Logan in 1775. It is now the Main Street of Stanford.

St. Asaph, as a name for Logan's Fort, and this stream, was adopted at the suggestion of a devout Welshman, who recalled that May 1, the day on which Logan reached the spring, was the anniversary of the canonization of Asaph, a monk in the monastery on the River Elry in North Wales, and the suggestion was agreeable to Logan, who forthwith decided to call his fort and stream, St. Asaph. A legend, which is recounted by the members of the Shelby family, lends color to this explanation of the naming of the fort. The legend states that on one occasion a daughter of Shelby asked her father why Logan named his fort St. Asaph, and received this cryptic reply. "Don't you ever read your Bible?". The inference is that Logan, whose piety could not be questioned, preferred

the Psalms written by Asaph, and was glad to honor the Psalmist in the naming of his fort and the stream.

In a new-found home it is natural for settlers to honor the places of their nativity by adopting such names as would recall vistas of bygone days; and, in reverence for their homes of the past, such names, like themselves, were transplanted in a new soil with changes, contractions, or abreviations, necessary for euphony or dialectic convenience.

A municipal borough in Lincolnshire, England, commonly called Stamford, and originally spelled Staenford, in its evolution, became Stanford, the official name of the county seat of Lincoln, and this name superseded St. Asaph, the early name of the settlement.

The group of springs, known as Buffalo Springs, derives its name from an incident which is recounted in a legend. It is said that a buffalo, which had been killed at the brow of the cliff above the spring, toppled over into the water, and thereafter the spring was called the "Buffalo Spring", from which the group gets its name. One of the springs in the group is known as the "Rout Spring", named for Wesley Rout, who operated a mill there for many years.

Emigrants, who followed the tide over the hazardous trail from Virginia, and elsewhere after the "bloody sevens," found in Lincoln County ideal locations for homes, and from the Wilderness Trail many traces were made. The various traces, leaving the trail, generally followed the courses of

the little creeks, of which there are many in the county. In time these traces became the primary road system of the county.

South of the Orchard is a trace which serves the territory watered by ıck Creek. The origin of the name of this creek is obscure. It is probably contraction of Buchanan in honor of Col. Buchanan who was a companion of r. Thomas Walker on his first trip to the Wilderness in 1747. The territory xplored by the party was in the Cumberland River area, and the name, Buck reek, was given to the stream for purposes of identification, as most treams were named for the pioneers who discovered them, or through whose reemptions they had their course. However, a legend states that the hunters ound two bucks, engaged in a life and death struggle, on the banks of the reek, with their antlers so interlocked that they could not extricate themselves. In this predecament the deer fell easy prey for the hunters, who named the stream "Buck Creek".

A trace going north from the Orchard led to the site of Lewis Craig's church, which was located on Gilbert's Creek in 1781. This is said to be the first church built in Kentucky. The site is now in Garrard County. On this trace is a village, Preachersville, which has the distinction of being the only town of that name in the United States. Preachersville was established as a post village January 27, 1875, with William H. Cummins as postmaster. This section was the objective point of the many preachers who visited the Wilderness in pioneer days,--hence the village was known as Preachersville.

Gilbert's Creek was probably named for Elder John Gilbert, a Baptist minister for over sixty years, who was a scout and soldier during the closing years of the Revolutionary War. He was active in this section, and died at the age of 110 years.

In this section of the county is the site of the Francis Underwood mill, built on Dick's River in 1783. It was the first mill west of the Alleghanys, and its location was on the property which now belongs to Henry Anderson. The mill was destroyed by fire, but the original mill stones, after being submerged for perhaps a hundred hears, have been recovered and are now preserved as relics of that historic enterprise. The site is known, but not marked.

As time passed, the traces, made by the pioneers , became roads, and assumed the names of the settlements to which they led; a custom which prevails today except when, for expediency, the great highways are designated by numbers.

Lincoln is considered one of the best watered counties of the state, having many never-drying streams, which are tributaries of Kentucky, Cumberland, and Green Rivers. With few exceptions the streams are named for pioneers, who staked claims prior to 1781. In the Book of Surveys in the Lincoln County Clerk's Office they are frequently mentioned as boundaries and landmarks in connection with pre emptions.

Green County, which was established in 1792, was named for Major General Nathanial Green. Its capital is Greensburg and the principal hotel bears the same name. It is said that the proprietor, a Mr. Green, in order to carry out

the color scheme served greens every day for a salad. The stream which has its source at Hall's Gap, in Lincoln County, where the three water sheds of the state converge, assumes the dignity of a river in Green County, and naturally falls heir to the name of that colorful county which was once a part of Lincoln.

Hall's Gap, where Green River has its source, was named for John Hall, a pioneer, whose preemption in 1781 on Logan's Creek, included that famous scenic attraction.

Warrant #1259, entered in 1781, describes the claim of Martin Hawkins, through which the stream, which bears his name, runs.

Neal's Creek was probably named for pioneer Richard J. Neal; and Mason's Gap, on Neal's Creek, for the Mason family, which owned many acres of land in that area. Chappell's Gap, and Creek, are named for the Chappell family, the descendants of whom still live in that section, and for like reasons other streams and localities are named.

The second stream in importance in Lincoln County, Dick's River being the first, is Hanging Fork. It gets its name from a gruesome incident which occurred in the early settlement of the village. It is said that two desperadoes, who had escaped from the authorities in Virginia, were recaptured in the vicinity. After their apprehension, when enroute to Virginia, there they would be hung for their depredations, they gave the officers much trouble, and the officers, being weary of the watch, decided to hang the culprits at once, and thus relieve

themselves of an onerous duty, and at the same time carry out the mandate of the court. The hanging took place at the forks of the stream in the edge of the settlement, and thereafter, both the stream, and the village, were called Hanging Fork.

The settlement, being at the intersection of the trails from the Kentucky River to the Green River valley, and from St. Asaph to the Falls of the Ohio, was known first as the Cross Roads. The post-village, Hanging Fork, was established May 30, 1818, with John Murrell as postmaster. The name of the office was changed to New Store on February 13, 1826, and on May 18, 1826, it was changed back to Hanging Fork. By Legislative act in January, 1838, the office was named Hustonville, in honor of two Huston brothers who owned a large acreage of land at the Cross Roads. The trustees of the village were Richard N. Coffey, James Cooper, J. M. Nichols, John Allen, and James Linbe.ry. The village has the distinction of having had four names.

At. St. Asaph, according to Filson's Map, the Wilderness Trail subdivides into several traces, one of which leads north to Dick's and Kentucky Rivers, Craig's Station, and Lexington. Another trace leads to Clark's, Cowan's Crow's, and Harrod's Stations, thence to McAfee's Station and the Kentucky River. The The western trace leads to Knob Lick, Warren's and Shelby's Stations, and Green River.

A trace from St. Asaph, which follows the general course of the Hanging Fork, passes through Hustonville to Carpenter's Station, which was established

on Carpenter's Creek about 1780 by G. S. Carpenter. Carpenter, who owned much land in that area, contributed liberally to the building and support of one of the early churches of the state at Hustonville, which was a center of religious and social activities in pioneer days. It is stated that Carpenter made an additional contribution of $100.00 to the church, in order that the spire might be built high enough to be seen from his fort. The ways of the Almighty are inscrutable, and it remains a matter of conjecture as to whether it was divine providence, or merely a coincidence that the spire was blown down by a terrific windstorm at the time that Carpenter died. The first store house in Hustonville was built by Archie Robards, son-in-law of G. S. Carpenter.

Near Hustonville, on a brance of Hanging Fork, is the site of McKinney's Station, which was established before 1792, by Archibald McKinney. This was one of the first trading posts in Kentucky, and it is a post village at the present time. It served as a clearing house for the hunters of the Green River valley, who exchanged the products of the chase for powder, tobacco, sugar, prints, and such commodities as were offered by the traders who visited the terrotory. The site of the original log cabin is known but not marked.

It is said that Waynesburg, one of the early settlements of the county, was named for Gen. Anthony Wayne, who was often spoken of as "Mad" Anthony Wayne. In 1792 he was appointed by Washington to the command of the army engaged against the Indians on the western front. Gen. Wayne attained great distinction as a military leader, and in his honor Wayne County, originally a

part of Lincoln, was named.

It is obvious that Highland was named for topographical reasons - the elevation being approximately 1400 feet, which is about 500 feet above the Main Street of Stanford. The post office naturally has the same name.

In the absence of definite knowledge it may be presumed that King's Mountain derived its name from the famous mountain, of the same name, in North Carolina, which figured largely in the Revolutionary War in 1780. A great influx of emigrants from that state into Kentucky took place after the war, and it is reasonable to suppose that they introduced tha name for that locality.

It is interesting to note that the names of the homes of that great triumvirate of personalities that was so largely responsible for the very integrity of Kentucky as a state and its development from a wilderness to the "pride of the Union", indicate the dominating attributes of the individual rather than a mere mark of ownership, and that these three homes were established within the present bounds of Lincoln County.

It was natural that the home of Logan, the man of God, should have the Biblical title, St. Asaph, and one familiar with the social activities of Whitley would expect no other descriptive title for his home than "Sportsman's Hill".

In keeping with the trend the home of Isaac Shelby, the diplomat, was known as "Travelers Rest". The calling of Shelby, who was an outstanding

personality in the political activities of the time, demanded that his home be the gathering place of men on whom the destiny of the territory depended, and the nature of their reception automatically designated his mansion, - "Traveler's Rest". In 1775 Isaac Shelby located ten thousand acres of land in Lincoln County, and in 1780, after participating in many engagements incident to the settlement of the territory, he returned to complete his title to the claim on which, it is said, the first stone house in the state was built in 1787.

The picturesque career of Col. Shelby began with the office of surveyor and progressed through the graduations of public service, to the governor on June 4, 1792. "A brave and plain officer, who had gallantly served in the Revolutionary War, and distinguished himself at King's Mountain and Point Pleasant."

Lincoln County was undoubtedly the center of activities in pioneer days, and for that reason the Court, organized at Harrodsburg in 1781, was immediately removed to St. Sasph.

Collins' History of Kentucky says, "The pioneer stations in the boundaries of the present Lincoln County exceed in number those of any other county. Possibly this list may embrace several not located in Lincoln, but in an adjoining county; Cane Run, Carpenter's, Casey's, Carb Orchard, Craig's, Clark's, Crow's, Forks of Dick's River, Gilmer's, Know Lick, Logan's Fort or St. Asaph, McKinney's, Montgomery's, Pettit's, Whitley's, Wilson's,

Worthington's - - 17 in all".

The places mentioned in this article do not comprise a complete list of the historic points in the county.

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